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***Manner: TRAFFIC***

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During the calendar year 1998, the Medical Examiner's Office participated in the investigation of 199 traffic fatalities, an 8% decrease compared to 1997 when there were 216 traffic deaths. In 1998 there were 119 traffic deaths where the accident occurred in King County compared to 141 in 1997 and 131 in 1996. In 1998, 40% (80/199) of all traffic deaths were the result of accidents occurring outside of King County with the injured transferred to hospitals in the county, primarily Harborview Medical Center. Because death occurred in King County, they come under the Medical Examiner's jurisdiction. This is comparable to 35% (75) in 1997 and 36% (74) in 1996.

Of the 199 traffic fatalities in 1998, 66% (132/199) were deaths occurring to an occupant (either a driver or passenger) of a motor vehicle. In 1998, teenagers (13-19 years old) accounted for 9 driver deaths and 8 passenger deaths, and there were 5 passenger deaths of young children (12 years and under).

Forty-three percent (85/199) of the traffic fatalities were motor vehicle drivers. Teenage drivers were 11% (9/85) of the driver deaths in 1998 compared to (11%, 10/88) in 1997. Twenty-six percent of vehicle driver deaths (22/85) were people between the ages of 20 and 29. Twenty-nine percent of driver deaths (25/85) were adults between the ages of 30 and 39. There were more than twice as many male driver deaths as female driver deaths (60 to 25).

Blood ethanol (alcohol) statistics are presented to describe the role of alcohol in traffic deaths. However, it should be noted that in many cases someone other than the person who died may have been under the influence of alcohol and directly involved in the accident. The Medical Examiner determines the blood alcohol levels of persons who die, not of everyone involved in the incident. In addition blood alcohol is not tested in persons who die after surviving more than 24 hours, because in those deaths the alcohol has had time to metabolize<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, blood alcohol figures presented in this report are not a total description of the role of alcohol in traffic accidents. In 30% (15/50) of drivers tested, blood ethanol was present. In 35 vehicle driver deaths, no alcohol determination was performed. Passenger fatalities showed the presence of alcohol in 19% (6/31) of victims tested.

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<sup>1</sup>See "Explanation of Data" for criteria for blood alcohol testing.

Of the 132 vehicle driver/passenger deaths, 45 (34%) were known to be wearing restraints. This is comparable to 34% (50) in 1997, and 37% in 1996 and 23% in 1995. The rest were either not restrained, or their restraint use is not known (Table 7-4, page 73, Traffic Fatality Circumstances and Use of Restraint/Helmet). Of the vehicle drivers who died at the scene of the accident and who tested positive for blood alcohol, 30% (6/20) were either unrestrained or it is unknown whether they were wearing restraints.

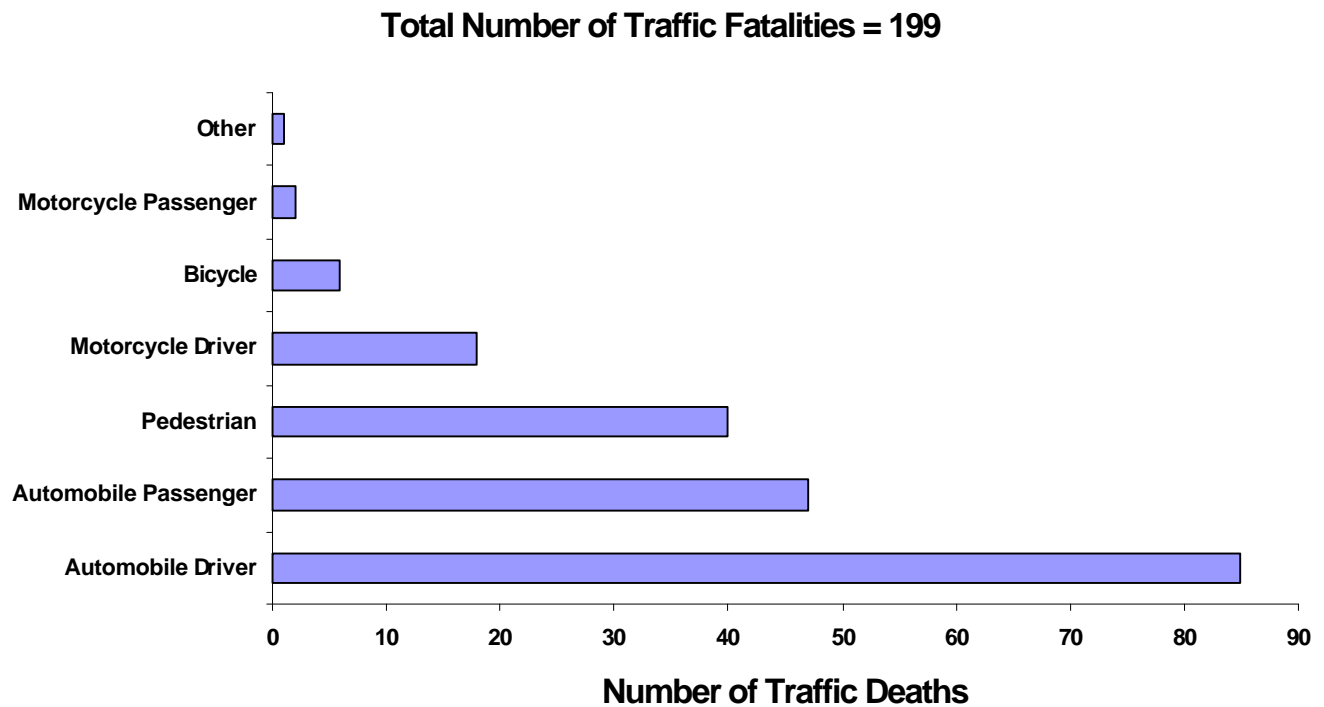
Motorcycle riders accounted for 10% (20/199) of traffic fatalities. All of the motorcycle drivers were males and of the two passenger deaths, both were male. Ninety percent (18/20) of motorcycle fatalities (both drivers and passengers) were known to be wearing helmets. The rest were either not wearing helmets or their use of helmets is not known (Table 7-4, page 73, Traffic Fatality Circumstances and Use of Restraint/Helmet). This is an increase of those known to be wearing helmets as compared to 69% in 1997. Ninety-one percent (18/20) of the motorcyclists were tested for the presence of blood alcohol. Of the eighteen tested, four had a detectable amount of alcohol at the time of autopsy.

Pedestrians constituted 20% (40/199) of traffic fatalities. The majority of pedestrian deaths were male 58% (23/40). Of the pedestrian fatalities who were tested, 27% (6/22) had detectable amounts of alcohol present at the time of death.

There were six bicyclist deaths in 1998. Five were not wearing helmets and one unknown.

Graph 7-1

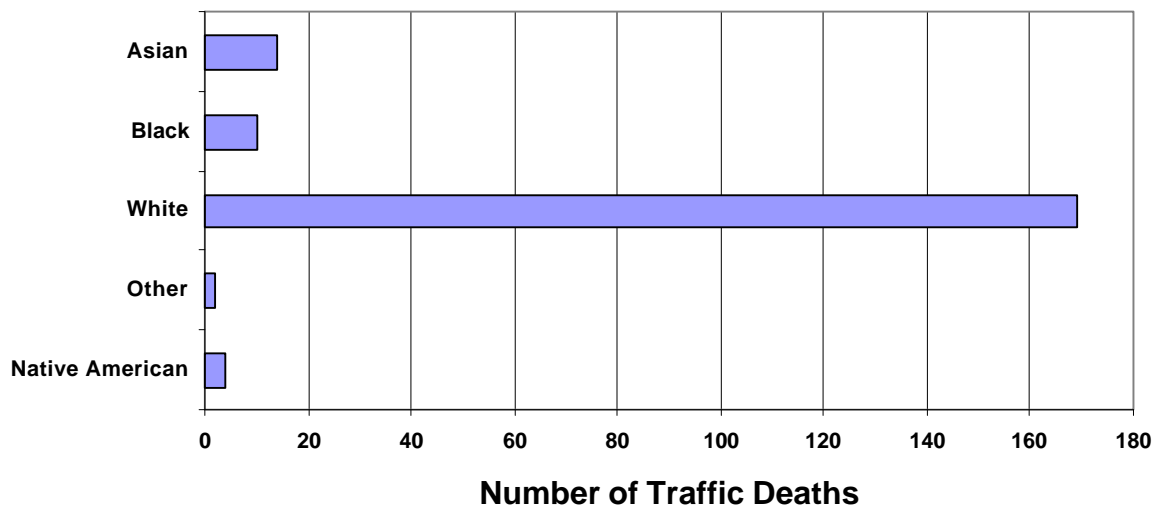
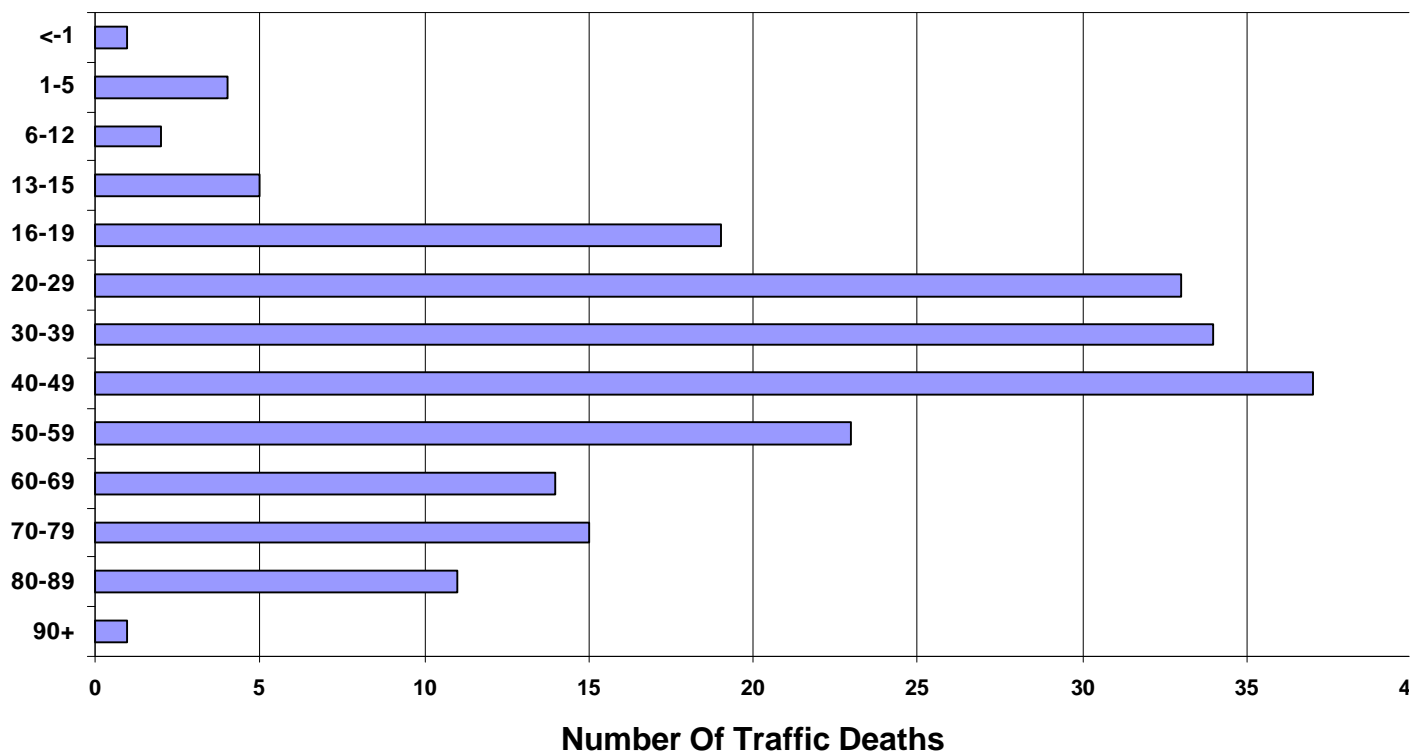
## Traffic Fatality Circumstances in 1998



**Table 7-1 Traffic Fatality Circumstances and Race of the Decedent**

CIRCUMSTANCES/ GENDER	RACE					SUB TOTAL	TOTAL
	ASIAN	BLACK	OTHER	WHITE	NATIVE AMERICAN		
Bicycle	0	1	0	5	0		6
<i>Male</i>	0	1	0	4	0	5	
<i>Female</i>	0	0	0	1	0	1	
Automobile driver	4	3	1	74	3		85
<i>Male</i>	2	3	1	53	1	60	
<i>Female</i>	2	0	0	21	2	25	
Automobile passenger	6	2	0	38	1		47
<i>Male</i>	5	0	0	16	1	22	
<i>Female</i>	1	2	1	22	0	25	
Other <sup>2</sup>	0	0	0	1	0		1
<i>Male</i>	0	0	0	1	0	1	
<i>Female</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Motorcycle driver	1	0	0	17	0		18
<i>Male</i>	1	0	0	17	0	18	
<i>Female</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Motorcycle passenger	0	0	0	2	0		2
<i>Male</i>	0	0	0	2	0	2	
<i>Female</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Pedestrian	3	4	1	32	0		40
<i>Male</i>	1	2	1	19	0	23	
<i>Female</i>	2	2	0	13	0	17	
Total	14	10	2	169	4		199
Percent	7	5	1	85	2		

<sup>2</sup> Other includes 1 struck by car while riding on a sled.

**Graph 7-2 Traffic Fatalities and Race of the Decedent****Graph 7-3 Traffic Fatalities and Age Group of the Decedent**

**Table 7-2 Traffic Fatality Circumstances and Age Group of the Decedent**

CIRCUMSTANCES/ GENDER	AGE GROUP													SUB TOT AL	TOTAL
	< 1	1 to 5	6 to 12	13 to 15	16 to 19	20 to 29	30 to 39	40 to 49	50 to 59	60 to 69	70 to 79	80 to 89	90 +		
Bicycle	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0		6
<i>Male</i>	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	5	
<i>Female</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	
Automobile driver	0	0	0	0	9	13	19	14	10	8	8	4	0		85
<i>Male</i>	0	0	0	0	7	8	12	11	7	7	5	3	0	60	
<i>Female</i>	0	0	0	0	2	5	7	3	3	1	3	1	0	25	
Automobile passenger	1	3	1	2	6	9	6	6	2	3	4	3	1		47
<i>Male</i>	1	2	0	1	2	6	3	3	1	2	0	1	0	22	
<i>Female</i>	0	1	1	1	4	3	3	3	1	1	4	2	1	25	
Other	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		1
<i>Male</i>	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	
<i>Female</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Motorcycle driver	0	0	0	0	1	8	1	5	3	0	0	0	0		18
<i>Male</i>	0	0	0	0	1	8	1	5	3	0	0	0	0	18	
<i>Female</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Motorcycle passenger	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		2
<i>Male</i>	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	
<i>Female</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Pedestrian	0	1	0	1	1	3	6	10	8	3	3	4	0		40
<i>Male</i>	0	1	0	1	0	3	3	5	5	1	2	2	0	23	
<i>Female</i>	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	5	3	2	1	2	0	17	
Total	1	4	2	5	19	33	34	37	23	14	15	11	1		199
Percent	.5	2	1	3	9.5	16.5	17	18.5	11.5	7	7.5	5.5	.5		

**Table 7-3 Traffic Fatality Circumstances and Gender of the Decedent**

CIRCUMSTANCES	GENDER		TOTAL
	MALE	FEMALE	
Bicycle	5	1	6
Automobile driver	60	25	85
Automobile passenger	22	25	47
Other	1	0	1
Motorcycle driver	18	0	18
Motorcycle passenger	2	0	2
Pedestrian	23	17	40
Total	131	68	199
Percent	66	34	

**Table 7-4 Traffic Fatality Circumstances and Use of Restraint/Helmet<sup>3</sup>**

CIRCUMSTANCES	RESTRAINT OR HELMET USED	NO RESTRAINT OR HELMET USED	UNKNOWN	TOTAL
Bicycle	0	5	1	6
Automobile driver	27	42	16	85
Automobile passenger	18	16	13	47
Other	0	0	1	1
Motorcycle driver	16	1	1	18
Motorcycle passenger	2	0	0	2
Total	63	64	32	159
Percent	40	40	20	

<sup>3</sup>Excludes pedestrians.

**Table 7-5 Traffic Fatality Circumstances and Blood Alcohol Test Results of the Decedent**

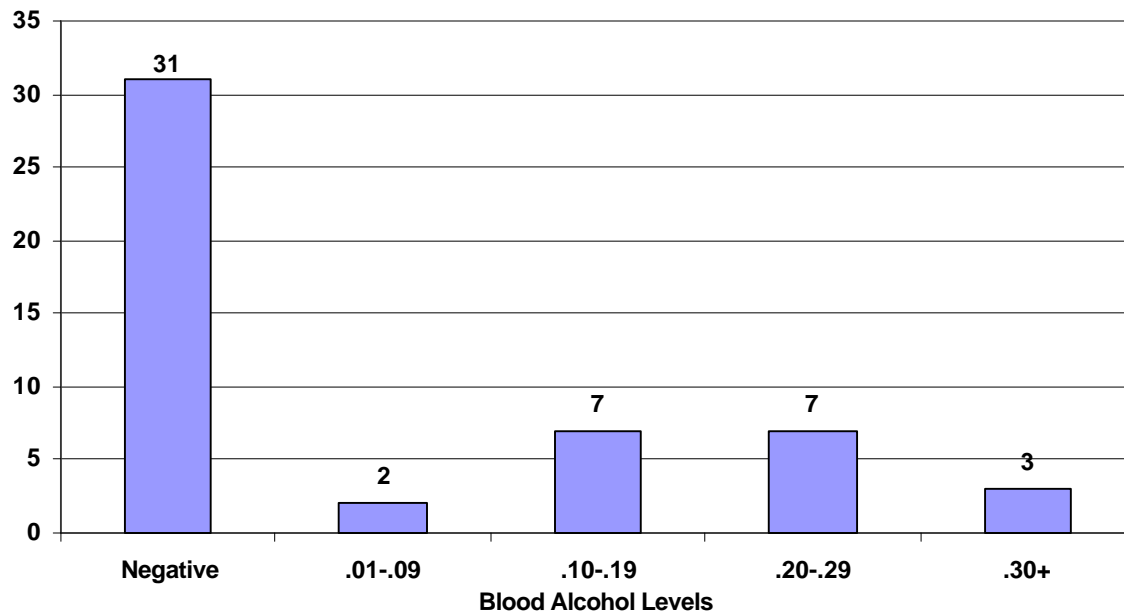
CIRCUMSTANCES OF DEATH	TEST RESULT		NOT TESTED	TOTAL
	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE		
Bicycle	1	5	0	6
Automobile driver	15	35	38	85
Automobile passenger	6	25	16	47
Other	0	0	1	1
Motorcycle driver	4	12	2	18
Motorcycle passenger	0	2	0	2
Pedestrian	6	16	18	40
Total	29	95	75	199
Percent	15	48	38	

**Table 7-6 Blood Alcohol Levels of Traffic Fatalities who DIED AT THE SCENE of the Accident<sup>4</sup>**

CIRCUMSTANCES	BLOOD ALCOHOL LEVEL (G%)					TOTAL
	NONE	.01-.09	.10-.19	.20-29	.30+	
Bicycle	0	0	0	0	0	0
Automobile driver	12	0	3	4	1	20
<i>Restrained</i>	6	0	1	1	0	8
<i>Unrestrained or unknown</i>	6	0	2	3	1	12
Automobile passenger	9	1	1	0	0	11
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0
Motorcycle driver	5	0	3	1	0	9
Motorcycle passenger	1	0	0	0	0	1
Pedestrian	4	1	0	2	2	9
Total	31	2	7	7	3	50

<sup>4</sup>It should be noted that in many cases someone other than the person who died may have been under the influence of alcohol and directly involved in the accident. The Medical Examiner investigates the blood alcohol levels of the persons who die, not of everyone involved with the incident. In addition, alcohol levels are not tested in persons who die after surviving more than 24 hours, because in those deaths the alcohol has had time to metabolize. Therefore, the blood alcohol figures presented in this report are not a total description of the role of alcohol in traffic accidents.



**Graph 7-4                      Blood Alcohol Levels of Traffic Fatalities who DIED AT THE SCENE of the Accident**

**Table 7-7 Time of Day of Traffic Incident Resulting in Fatality**

TIME OF DAY	NUMBER	PERCENT
12:01 AM - 3:00 AM	31	16.0
3:01 AM - 6:00 AM	12	6.0
6:01 AM - 9:00 AM	22	11.0
9:01 AM - Noon	20	10.0
12:01 PM - 3:00 PM	22	11.0
3:01 PM - 6:00 PM	32	16.0
6:01 PM - 9:00 PM	28	14.0
9:01 PM - Midnight	32	16.0
Total	199	

**Graph 7-5 Time of Day of Traffic Incident Resulting in Fatality**